

PRESS RELEASE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY



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PANDEMIC INFLUENZA SUMMIT HELD TO IMPROVE COORDINATION AND ENCOURAGE PLANNING EFFORTS

All Californians share responsibility to be prepared

S. KIMBERLY BELSHÉ
SECRETARY

LOS ANGELES – Today Kimberly Belshé, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, joined Governor Schwarzenegger, federal, and local leaders at a Pandemic Influenza Summit in Los Angeles to improve upon California's preparedness. The focus of the summit was to enhance coordination and encourage planning efforts throughout the state.

The summit was held in response to the expectation that the H5N1 strain of bird flu will be found in birds in the United States within the next few months. The detection of the virus in birds will not signal the start of a human pandemic, however it does highlight the state's need to be prepared.

"All Californians share a responsibility to be prepared for this or any other natural or man-made disaster," said Secretary Belshé. "The state is working on a comprehensive preparedness effort, but we need your help. Individuals, communities, businesses and all levels of government need to continue their efforts to ensure that the state is prepared."

Governor Schwarzenegger and his administration have shown commitment to the state's public health infrastructure and emergency preparedness and response. The Governor's proposed budget contains significant investments in pandemic influenza preparedness:

- \$27.6 million to strengthen state and local pandemic influenza planning and response efforts
- \$6 million to expand disease surveillance, strengthen to state's laboratory infrastructure and build surge capacity
- \$17.3 million to educate the public on how to personally prepare including a preparedness hotline

The Administration has already taken steps to prepare for this or any other public health emergency:

- Strengthened the disease surveillance system in place
- Coordinated with state agencies to ensure continuity of operations and defined roles in responding to the emergency
- Provided technical assistance to local jurisdictions to develop plans to provide surge capacity
- Conducted training exercises to test plans and improve performance

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